

**St. George
Resource Management Plan (RMP)
Amendment and
Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
Scoping Summary Report**

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

- ACEC – Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
- ATV – All Terrain Vehicle
- BLM – Bureau of Land Management
- DEIS – Draft Environmental Impact Statement
- EIS – Environmental Impact Statement
- NOI – Notice of Intent
- OHV – Off Highway Vehicle
- RMP – Resource Management Plan
- WSA – Wilderness Study Areas

St. George RMP Amendment/ EIS Scoping Summary Report

Background

Overview and Purpose of the RMP Amendment/EIS and Report

The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) St. George Field Office is preparing an amendment to the Resource Management Plan for public lands in Washington County, Utah, that will update Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) categories and provide for route designations within areas identified as "limited" under state and federal guidelines. During this process, the public is invited and encouraged to help BLM in completing the amendment through identifying and addressing key issues, providing information specific to route designations, and listing resources or sites that need special consideration through the planning process.

The lands are managed in accordance with the St. George 1999 RMP. Route designations for areas in "limited" categories were not completed as part of the RMP but reserved for a later time. Since approval of the RMP, state and federal strategies have been developed through interagency collaboration to address the rapid growth of OHV recreation throughout Utah and the western United States. The plan amendment will incorporate these strategies, which require BLM to modify existing OHV categories and complete the route designations.

Key objectives of the designations will be to

- provide the public with a clearly marked network of roads and trails with signs and maps to promote public safety, awareness, and enhanced recreation opportunities;
- reduce growing conflicts between increased motorized recreation and important resource values on public lands in Washington County;
- promote citizen-based opportunities for trail stewardship, monitoring, and system management; and
- support law enforcement officials in promoting compliance with OHV regulations and effective deterrents to abuses of public lands.

The plan amendment will include an EIS, which will identify a range of alternatives to address issues raised, in addition to identifying social, economic, and environmental impacts from the proposed changes.

The purpose of this report is to provide information on the scoping phase of the RMP Amendment/EIS including the public participation process, the scoping meetings, and public comments.

Map of Plan Area

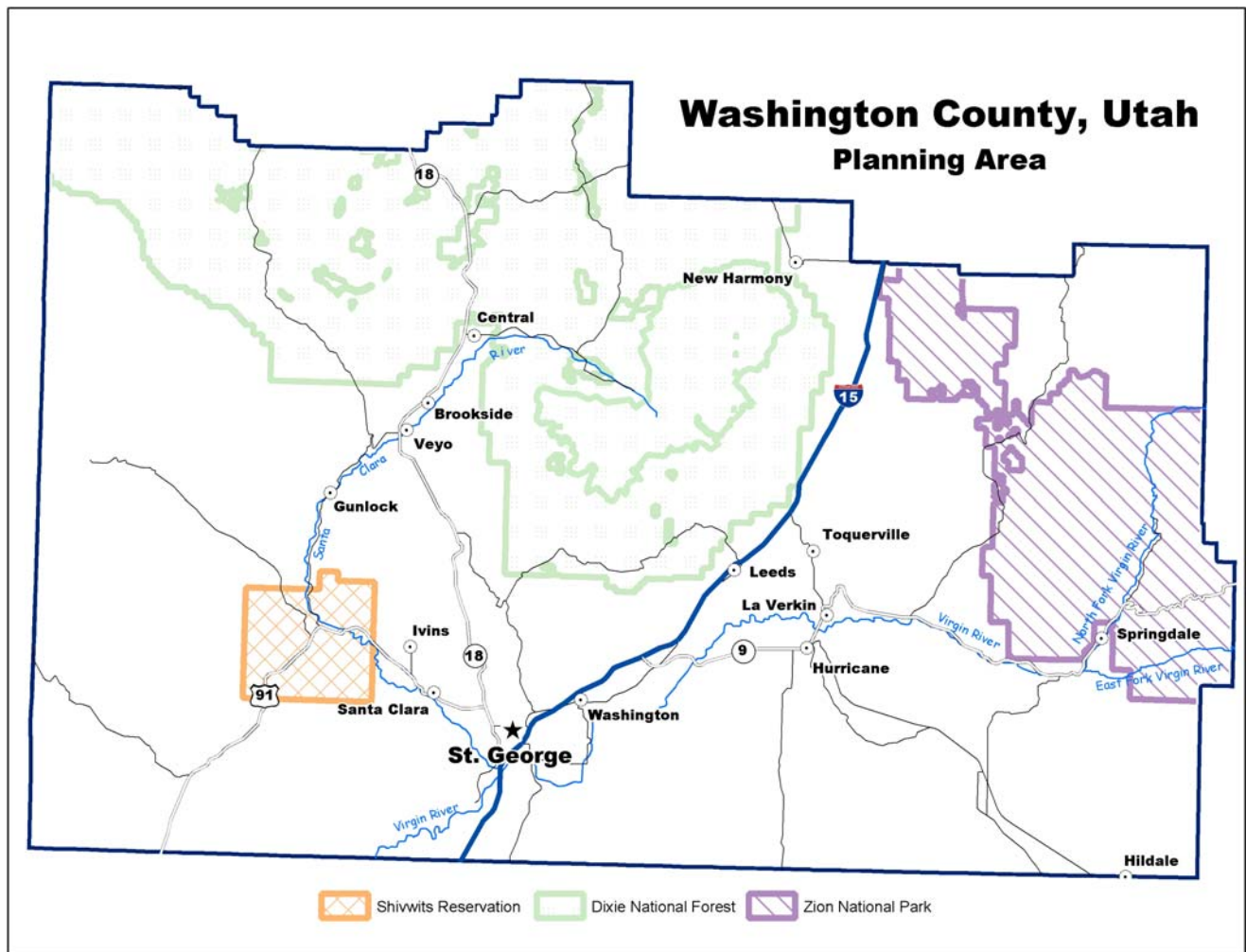


Figure 1. The Project Study Area Encompasses Washington County, Utah

Public Participation and Scoping Process

Overview

The scoping process is the process of determining the scope, focus, and content for an RMP Amendment/EIS. Scoping helps to identify the range of actions, alternatives, environmental effects, methods of assessment, and mitigation measures to be analyzed in depth, and eliminates from detailed study those issues that are not important to the decision at hand. It also provides an opportunity for active participation from a variety of audiences, including proponents and opponents of a proposed action, and encourages the expression of thoughts and/or concerns during the decision-making process.

Notice of Intent

The Notice Of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement and Amend the St. George Field Office Resource Management Plan was published in the Federal Register January 3, 2005 (Volume 70, Number 1). With publication of the NOI, the official comment period began January 3, 2005, and lasted for 60 days (from January 3, 2005, to March 4, 2005.) A copy of the NOI can be found in Attachment F. Two public workshops were planned in locations convenient to individuals and organizations most likely to be most impacted by or interested in the RMP Amendment/EIS. See “Public Scoping Meetings” for detailed information pertaining to the scoping meetings.

Outreach Components

Outreach for the public workshops was accomplished by numerous means, including posting public notices, developing a contacts database for purposes of notifying interested parties via mail, and maintaining a web site. Specific information regarding each outreach component is described below.

Public Notice/Planning Bulletin Notification

To provide notice of the public scoping meetings, a direct mail notice (Attachment A) was developed and distributed to more than 200 individuals on the RMP Amendment/EIS mailing list during the early part of January 2005. The one-paged, two-sided bulletin contained background information about the RMP Amendment/EIS, advertised the public meetings and web site, and provided contact information.

Mailings

A project contacts database was developed prior to scoping in order to formulate a distribution list for meeting notification. A mailing list was generated from BLM lists of government agencies, tribes, special interest groups, and organizations and was used to distribute the planning bulletin, and invite interested parties to attend one of two scoping meetings. The list was comprised of residents, public officials, and individuals interested in the planning effort. The database continues to be refined to include respondents from the scoping process. See Attachment B for the mailing list.

Web site

An up-to-date planning effort web site (www.stgeorgeohvplan.com) was maintained to provide detailed information including

- the planning process,
- key issue areas,
- draft planning criteria,
- planning bulletins and draft documents, and
- contact information.

The web site address was advertised on the planning bulletin and other planning materials and handouts and was linked to the St. George BLM home page.

Other Outreach Efforts

Other outreach efforts were undertaken to increase awareness of the public scoping meetings. These efforts included the following.

- Posters announcing the meetings were distributed to various local organizations and retailers for display.
- Scoping meeting dates and comment deadlines were announced extensively through the local news media and KDXU talk radio.
- Bulletins, Maps, Frequently Asked Questions, and Public Comment Forms were placed in 17 information stations at city offices, businesses, and public buildings throughout the county.

Public Agency and Tribal Government Coordination

Various public agencies were invited to and participated in the scoping process. Representatives of Washington County, the Five County Association of Governments (AOG), the U.S. Forest Service, and the Utah Division of Parks and Recreation attended the scoping workshops and made

themselves available to answer questions about OHV issues and to listen to comments from attendees.

Letters were sent to tribal representatives inviting participation in the scoping process (Attachment G). The letters were sent to the following tribes:

- Confederated Tribes of the Goshute
- Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah
- Koosharem Band
- Kanosh Band
- Shivwits Band
- Indian Peaks Band
- Cedar Band
- Skull Valley Goshutes
- The Ute Indian Tribe
- Moapa Band of Paiutes
- San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe
- Navajo Nation
- Hopi Tribal Council
- Navajo Nation, Aneth Chapter
- Navajo Nation, Mexican Water Chapter
- Navajo Nation, Navajo Mountain Chapter
- Navajo Nation, Ojiaito Chapter
- Navajo Nation, Red Mesa Chapter
- Navajo Nation, Teec Nos Pos Chapter
- Navajo Nation, Dennehotso Chapter
- Navajo Utah Commission
- Acoma Pueblo
- Cochiti Pueblo
- Isleta Pueblo
- Jemez Pueblo
- Laguna Pueblo
- Nambe Pueblo
- Picuris Pueblo
- Pojoaque Pueblo
- Sandia Pueblo
- San Felipe Pueblo

- San Ildefonso
- San Juan Pueblo
- Santa Ana Pueblo
- Santa Clara Pueblo
- Santo Domingo Pueblo
- Taos Pueblo
- Tesuque Pueblo
- Zia Pueblo
- Zuni Pueblo
- Skull Valley Goshutes

Preliminary inquiries were made to the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah and to the Shivwits Band of Paiute Indians to determine if they would be interested in serving as Cooperating Agencies for the planning amendment. The Shivwits Band requested that BLM follow up with a formal request for their consideration.

Invitations were also extended to Washington County and the Five County AOG to serve as Cooperating Agencies based on jurisdiction and/or special expertise. Both accepted the invitation.

BLM representatives met with several local and state agencies and tribes before and during the formal scoping period to brief officials, coordinate efforts, and share information pertinent to the plan amendment. Among others, these included the Natural Resources Coordinating Committee of the Five County AOG, the Washington County Commission, the Southern Utah Planning Authorities Council (SUPAC), SUPAC's Technical Advisory Committee on OHVs, Utah BLM's Resource Advisory Council, and the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources. Numerous contacts were made with Washington County on coordination with roads and resource data.

BLM made a presentation to the Shivwits Band Council on the OHV Plan Amendment at Band headquarters in March 2005.

Outreach to and coordination with public agencies and tribal governments will continue throughout the planning process.

Public Scoping Meetings

Scoping Meetings Overview

The meetings were held during the first week of February 2005, and were designed to inform the public about the planning process and solicit meaningful input related to the scale, scope, and issues associated with the RMP Amendment/EIS. The meetings also provided the public an opportunity to communicate issues and concerns at the onset of the planning

process to help develop alternatives. More than 140 combined were in attendance at the two workshops. Details for the two workshops follow:

Hurricane
Wednesday, February 2, 2005
7:00–9:00 P.M.
Exhibit Hall
Washington County Regional Park
Hurricane, UT

St. George
Thursday, February 3, 2005
7:00–9:00 P.M.
Holiday Inn
St. George, UT

Meeting Structure

Each workshop was conducted in an open-house style format. Upon registration, attendees received several handouts including a scoping meeting agenda, copy of the Planning Bulletin, a summary of frequently asked questions and answers, a detailed project overview document and a blank comment form. Copies of the agenda, sign-in sheets, and other meeting handouts are included in Attachments C, D, and E. Shortly into the meeting, a brief presentation was given by BLM staff to provide attendees with general project information including the history, purpose, timeline, summary of the environmental studies to be conducted, and overview of the public review process. Following the presentation, the audience was invited to present their input or ask questions at a series of workstations set up around the room.

Staff

The following representatives of the BLM, Washington County, U.S. Forest Service, and project consultants participated in the scoping meetings:

- Jim Crisp, BLM
- Dawna Ferris, BLM
- Anne Stanworth, BLM
- Randy Trujillo, BLM
- Todd Christensen, BLM
- Wade Judy, BLM
- Andrew Dubrasky, BLM
- Kent Dastrup, BLM
- Mark Harris, BLM

- Noelle Meier, Dixie National Forest
- Brad Piehl, Jones & Stokes
- Ingrid Norgaard, Jones & Stokes
- Alan Gardner, Washington County Commission
- Ron Whitehead, Washington County Public Works
- Ken Sizemore, Five County AOG
- Bruce Hamilton, Utah State Parks and Recreation
- Rob Quist, Utah State Parks and Recreation

Meeting Agenda and Content

As previously described, the meetings were open-house style consisting of various stations with informative exhibits. Station themes included: Project Overview, GIS mapping, Public Involvement, and the Environmental Review Process. Additional stations were set up for representatives of Washington County and other public land stewards, including Utah State Parks and the Dixie National Forest. A registration table and area to draft written comments were also designated. Flip charts and markers were available throughout the meeting room where meeting attendees were able to capture additional thoughts. The following is a summary of the information provided at each station.



Figure 2. Overview of RMP Amendment/EIS

Station 1: Project Overview

BLM staff provided various materials including project area maps, 1999 RMP Executive Summaries, full copies of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS and Record of Decision, and an OHV Rules and Regulations Overview to get attendees acquainted with the project as well as other BLM-related projects and information.

Station 2: GIS Mapping

BLM representatives staffed the GIS mapping station. Provided were multiple maps of the project area in various magnifications, which attendees were asked to markup with OHV routes they use, are familiar with, and/or are otherwise areas of interest.



Figure 3. Providing Input on OHV Routes

Station 3: Environmental Review

Project consultants staffed the station and were available to answer questions associated with the environmental studies related to the project. An information board listing a consolidated list of Key Issues was displayed along with a laptop computer highlighting various pages of the planning web site.

Station 4: Public Lands in Washington County

Washington County officials provided road maps and answered questions about county policies for motorized travel, road inventories, and coordination with BLM.

Station 5: Forest Service Coordination

A Dixie National Forest recreation planner displayed motorized route maps of the adjacent Pine Valley Ranger District in Washington County and answered questions concerning the OHV travel plan currently underway on the forest. She also answered questions and took public comments regarding coordination of travel planning between the Forest Service and BLM.

Station 6: Public Involvement

BLM provided charts and handouts that explained timeframes and opportunities for public participation in the OHV planning process. Comment sheets and mailers were also provided that guided participants in making helpful submissions to BLM and to request their names be added to the mailing list. Boxes were available for participants who wished to deposit their comments before leaving the meetings.

Public Comment

Public Comment Process

As part of the scoping phase, meeting participants and interested parties were encouraged to offer their input related to the RMP Amendment/EIS. As of March 14, 2005, more than 250 written comments have been received through e-mail, USPS mail, and from the two scoping meetings. The formal comment period for scoping ended on March 4, 2005. Persons who wish to review the comments may do so by contacting team leader, Dawna Ferris-Rowley, at the BLM office in St. George.

Public Comment Summary

The following is a summary of the comments received to date. The comments are paraphrased to reflect the key concerns, issues, and ideas expressed from the written and oral comments during the scoping period. The comments are categorized by main points of interest. BLM is responding to comments specifically relevant to OHV and transportation issues and concerns. However, issues and comments raised outside of the scope will be included in the administrative record.

RMP and EIS Process

- BLM should consider a screening out process to decide which current routes would be used for OHV travel, and which will be closed and returned to a natural state.
- The EIS should illustrate proposed wilderness units on a map.
- The plan should consider and plan for the future.
- In an effort to facilitate meaningful input, BLM should consider taking different approaches to communicate to the public about the planning process.
- Address socioeconomic impacts as part of the travel plan and EIS.
- Consider a complete and accurate inventory of all routes, as they currently exist.
- The environmental and social impacts of designated trails must be minimized and fully analyzed in the EIS.

Alternatives

- BLM should consider integrating a recreational education program into all management alternatives.
- Incorporate a Good Will Rider Program and/or Utah Trail Patrol into all management alternatives.
- BLM should consider the goals and objectives for all alternatives.
- One alternative should be formulated that maximizes and enhances motorized and mechanized recreation.
- One alternative should be formulated to include all inventoried routes.

Land Use

- BLM should consider the adoption of the Virgin River Heritage Plan.
- BLM should address the whole Field Office in this travel plan and not leave some areas for designation at a later date.
- The plan amendment should prevent future losses of public land use.
- Development of trails and roadways is a way to allow the public to access these public lands with less impact on the environments, and allows the public to enjoy the land that has been set-aside for this purpose.
- Need to resist the pressure of the short term and the expedient, and to preserve as much land as possible without the ruination that OHVs bring to it.
- Consider keeping what little natural areas there are in their initial condition.

- Exclude Grafton from the Special Recreational Permit and on BLM ATV maps.
- Consider not utilizing Grafton as a staging area.

Route and Trail Use

- Keep all RS2477 roads open.
- The plan amendment should limit the creation of new trails.
- Consider not eliminating cross-country travel in wash areas where land damage is not a problem.
- The sand dunes south of Sand Hollow should remain open.
- Eliminate illegal trails.
- Redundant routes should be closed and rehabilitated to a natural state, including routes in Dry Creek and Doc's Pass areas.
- The open ride area around Gunlock should be maintained and trails placed in other areas.
- The plan amendment should designate Butcher Knife Canyon, Dry Creek and Canaan Mountain off limits.
- Need well-defined maps for existing trail networks.
- Restrict OHV use to a small number of trails.
- Consider groups to maintain and preserve BLM trails.
- Consider developing, maintaining, and rerouting trail systems for OHV use that meet reasonable criteria for acceptable resource mitigation.
- Consider identifying areas where additional trails may be constructed in the future.
- BLM should consider adopting explicit standards for routes that are acceptable for OHV traffic.
- The plan should examine extensions of OHV trails from the Iron County line to the Arizona State line in the west.

Motorized Vehicle Use

- OHVs should remain on specific trails or roads, but roads should not be closed to OHVs.
- BLM should consider keeping the Pachoon Gulch area accessible for OHV use.
- The travel plan should not designate any additional "open areas" where OHV use is allowed without limitation.
- The whole Field Office should be addressed in this process, leaving no areas left for designation at a later date.

- All vehicles should be restricted to designated roads and trails throughout the entire Field Office, without an “open” play area except for the existing Sand Mountain OHV area.
- The plan amendment should examine off trail use of ATVs.
- OHV activity should stop, and OHV pioneered trails should be rehabilitated to a natural condition.
- The plan amendment should prohibit OHV use in all WSAs and lands with wilderness characteristics.
- Need to consider that there are other uses for OHVs beyond recreation, such as cattle operation for Ranchers; also used to conduct repair and maintenance activities to water transmission ditch and pipelines.
- All OHVs on public lands should be registered and assessed a fee.
- Consider OHV riding on roads and trails unless prohibition signs are posted (an “open unless signed closed” sign.).
- The plan amendment should be a comprehensive “final” plan for OHV use in the county to prevent further closures of lands in the future.
- Motorized routes that do the greatest damage to non-motorized recreational opportunities should not be designated open (e.g., routes which penetrate into otherwise roadless areas, or routes which interfere with popular hiking/biking areas).
- Combining non-motorized and motorized users on the same trail system is a bad idea. Create spatial separation of motorized and non-motorized routes so that these two conflicting uses do not overlap.
- The Canaan Mountain area needs to be open for motorized access.
- All routes should serve some reasonable and identifiable purpose. If there is no compelling reason for a route to stay open, then it should be closed.
- BLM should prohibit OHV on BLM lands adjacent and within view shed of the Grafton town site in order to protect lands (public and private) that are being managed as part of the Grafton historical monument.
- Approve a special use permit for organized ATV riders on public lands.
- The plan amendment should consider closing the bike trail on the northern Rockville BLM bench lands for bike and OHV use.
- BLM should review OHV Management recommendations prior to considering closing any more roads or areas to OHV recreation and access.
- OHV playgrounds should not be placed in the public domain.
- Consider keeping Browse Creek open for ATV use.
- Consider use of all trails for the Tri-State ATV Jamboree.
- Prohibit ATV and OHV use beyond Dammeron Valley Farms Drive, east into the Dammeron Valley Fire area, as well as near the Power Line corridor.

- Consider opening more areas for OHVs, particularly motorcycles.
- Prohibit use of OHVs throughout Utah, particularly southern Utah.

Wildlife Habitat and Related Resources

- Critical and sensitive wildlife habitats, riparian areas, or areas containing sensitive soils, should be precluded from motorized vehicle use.
- Need to preserve and protect rare plant habitat (beyond federally listed species.)
- Routes should not be allowed in sensitive wildlife habitat.
- RMP should limit the amount of designated OHV routes and should be biologically coordinated or not permitted at all.
- Keep ORV trails outside the proposed boundaries of America's Redrock Wilderness Act.
- Vehicles should be prohibited entirely from WSAs and wilderness quality lands. Adjacent BLM WSA, suitable wild and Scenic River segments; areas with sensitive erodible soils, riparian areas, and critical Mexican spotted owl habitat should be closed to OHV use.
- The plan amendment should consider seasonal closures to protect sensitive plant and animal species.
- Areas with known wildlife breeding and nesting areas should be limited in the amount of timing of OHV use.
- The use of streams for OHV use is unacceptable.
- Perennial streams such as the Beaver Dam Wash should be closed to motorized travel. This drainage is a critical habitat for the desert tortoise.
- The plan amendment should limit wildlife areas where there are bighorn sheep.
- OHV use should be restricted to protect biologically sensitive areas such as streams, washes, and fragile soils.
- The plan amendment should not designate new ORV routes, as this will further damage the ecological integrity of the area.
- Consider implementing monitoring and mitigation procedures for ORV impacts.
- The travel plan and EIS must evaluate the impacts of ORV use on the full range of resources present in the area.
- Protect ACECs from ATV/OHV soil contamination and disturbances.

Enforcement and Signage

- Need for enforcement through a "closed unless signed open" policy.
- Need to examine public safety.

- There is insufficient enforcement of OHV regulations. Any plan must include mandatory enforcement.
- Operators of OHVs should be licensed for safe use.
- The plan amendment should examine reckless driving.
- Need for clearly marked trails for OHV use on public lands.
- The Red Mountain WSA should be signed and patrolled regularly.
- Information should be available and prominently displayed at established staging areas encouraging users to stay on trails and to practice minimum impact recreation.
- Consider law enforcement through partnerships among BLM and conservation groups.

Cultural Resources

- The presence of roads and OHV trails exacerbates vandalism and looting of cultural resources found all over southwest Utah. The protection of archeological sites should also be given priority.
- Need to close lands immediately adjacent to the defined National Register of Historic Places boundary “Grafton Historic District” for OHV use. Restrict OHV and ATV trails from any of the sight lines from around the Grafton’s town site and cemetery.
- Cultural resources need to be protected from the looting and vandalism that often result from nearby motorized use.
- Extensive cultural resources in the Butcher Knife and Square Top areas should be protected.

Recreation Use

- Need for an area just for hiking and biking, and some just for OHV use. Consider trails designated for appropriate use by hikers, mountain bikes, and equestrians.
- There needs to be a fair allocation between motorized and non-motorized uses.
- The plan amendment should consider access to areas for outdoor activities.
- The plan amendment should provide trails where “quiet users” can be undisturbed by motorized vehicles.
- Consider keeping rest areas.

Air Quality, Noise and Visual Impacts

- The plan amendment should closely monitor air pollution.

- The plan amendment should consider the closure of routes and/or do not designate routes that are located in visually sensitive areas.
- The plan amendment should monitor noise, especially within the town boundaries of Rockville.
- Equipment restrictions should be in place to ensure that air pollution is reduced and minimized.
- The plan amendment should consider adequate opportunities to get out of audible range of motorized vehicles.
- Protect ACECs from noise disturbances.

Other Topics

- Provide questions to respond to on comment cards.
- Need for more control of bicycles on Little Creek.
- Need to consider a route/trail maintenance plan as part of the RMP.
- The plan amendment should examine trespassing on private lands.
- The map provided with the worksheet appears to show that Enterprise is not in Washington County.
- Updated (current) OHV route maps are needed.
- Consider placing more emphasis on the local residents' OHV wants and desires.
- BLM should study the results of ecological studies conducted for the National Park Service in Salt Creek Canyon after OHVs were excluded from that canyon.
- If BLM has to restrict the use of OHVs in game retrieval, then provide exceptions for licensed hunters who are disabled and who can't get to downed animals on foot.

Issue Analysis

The scoping process revealed several general themes associated with the RMP Amendment/EIS. Key issues raised include

- considering complete and accurate inventories of all routes, as they currently exist;
- providing ample opportunities for a variety of motorized recreation experiences to meet increased demands from user groups and the general public;
- protecting critical and culturally sensitive areas from OHV use, such as wildlife habitats, archeological sites, wilderness study areas, and riparian areas, as well as specific areas, including historic Grafton and other special management areas;

- designating specific roads and trails for OHV use and eliminating cross-country travel except in authorized “open” play areas;
- providing adequate mapping, enforcement, and signage at trail locations;
- considering a fair allocation between motorized and non-motorized uses, taking into account conflicting demands for providing unlimited riding opportunities versus preserving scenic and natural values; and
- monitoring and taking follow-up action to minimize resource impacts resulting from OHV activities.

Summary of Future Steps in the Planning Process

Following the scoping process, the RMP Amendment/EIS process was scheduled to proceed as follows.

Alternative Development Process	June 2005
Draft RMP Amendment/Draft EIS	October 2005
90 Day Public Comment Period	November 2005–January 2006
Final RMP Amendment/Final EIS	July 2006
Record of Decision	September 2006

In late March of 2005, Utah BLM's State Director determined that high priority RMPs being prepared by BLM in other parts of the state of Utah were not funded sufficiently to bring them to completion in accordance with the Director's planning schedule. Consequently, planning funds available to BLM offices in Utah were reallocated to ensure that RMPs already well underway were provided additional resources to complete the documents as planned. As a result, funds for the St. George OHV Plan Amendment and EIS were withdrawn from the project and made available to planning efforts in Richfield, Moab, and Monticello. Funds originally designated for the Cedar City Field Office RMP startup in fiscal year 2006 were also reallocated to other projects, delaying that startup into fiscal year 2007 or beyond.

BLM deeply regrets this change and understands the ramifications of deferring work on the St. George amendment, but has no alternative given funding shortfalls being experienced this year and anticipated in fiscal year 2006. BLM will extend the scoping period for the plan amendment indefinitely until it can be determined when funding can be restored to the project. During this time, the St. George Field Office will continue to consult with agencies, local governments, tribes, and interested parties to improve its roads and trails data in anticipation of resuming the plan amendment in the future.

Comments on planning issues can still be sent to BLM by mail or email to stgeorge_ohvplan@blm.gov. We will keep interested parties apprised of further developments through planning bulletins, mailings, and/or media releases.

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